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NUMBER 4

**APRIL MEETING:** The next regular meeting of the Association will be held on Thursday evening, 13th inst., at eight o'clock, in the Assembly Hall of the Public Library, corner McAllister and Larkin Sts. Take elevator to third floor. Car lines No. 5 or No. 19.

This meeting will afford our members an opportunity of greeting our Honorary President, Dr. William F. Badé, President of the Sierra Club, who will deliver an address on "The Birds of Hawaii." Visitors are welcome.

\* \* \*

**APRIL FIELD TRIP:** The usual day falling upon Easter Sunday, the trip will be postponed one week and will be taken on Sunday, April 23d, to Niles Canyon. San Francisco members will take Southern Pacific ferry at 8:40 a. m. and train for Niles. East Bay members will board train at First and Broadway, Oakland, at 9:12 a. m.

Party will start from Niles Station, (Southern Pacific), at 10 o'clock; follow up the creek bed and road to Farwell, and will board train at Farwell for return trip at 5:43 p. m. An easy walk of about five miles. Fare to Niles from San Francisco, \$1.02 and from Oakland, 84c. Fare from Farwell to San Francisco, \$1.08 and to Oakland, 90c.

Auto stages leave 12th and Clay Sts., Oakland, every hour on the half-hour. Running time to Niles, one hour. Fare, 50c each way. Bring lunch and canteens. Leader, Mr. Louis Rapp.

\* \* \*

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE MARCH MEETING:** The sixty-second regular meeting of the Association was held on March 9th, in the Assembly Hall of the San Francisco Public Library, with President Kibbe in the chair; thirteen members and ten guests in attendance.

Mr. Chase Littlejohn, of Redwood City, was elected an Honorary Member of the Association. Comments were made upon the appearance of ring-necked ducks on the Chain-of-Lakes in Golden Gate Park, and Mr. Smith gave interesting reminiscences of his past acquaintance with these birds in the central-northern region.

In opening his address on "Aviary Birds" the speaker of the evening, Mr. Harry R. Noack, characterized as unjustified the sentiment opposed to the maintenance of aviaries and the criticism of the practice as a mere amusement. While deprecating promiscuous captures and confinement of birds, Mr. Noack stated that where proper facilities are provided, with intelligent care and feeding, reasonable room, herbage or shrubbery, the birds are well off, as witness the longevity of doves, 15-18 years, and of finches, 10-12 years. Exotic birds form the great bulk of aviary inmates and these come mostly from localities where the bird population is very heavy. Too little consideration is accorded the aesthetic side of aviaries, where familiarity with the feathered occupants cultivates a spirit of kindness and affords mental relaxa-

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tion and keen enjoyment through the sweet songs and beautiful pictures, while in children's minds is fostered the study of birds, with a resulting interest in their welfare and admiration of them.

Aviaries enable studies of birds which are quite impossible in the field, especially of exotic species. Here periods of incubation and the development of plumage may readily be observed and a wide field is afforded for a study of the problems of hybridization. Mr. Noack made reference to various experiments which he has under way, in efforts to discover feasible improvements in homing pigeons through crossing with wild species.

Questioned as to the practice of splitting the tongues of magpies or other birds to make them talk, Mr. Noack stated that this was not at all necessary and cited the case of a yellow-billed magpie in his aviary which of its own accord learned to talk, saying "Harry," "Whoa, Peter," "Get up, Peter," etc.

The many queries and the discussion which followed the lecture gave evidence of the interest with which Mr. Noack has invested his subject.



### BIRDING ALONG THE MAD AND EEL RIVERS

#### Mergansers.

For the last ten or twelve years, I have been observing the merganser ducks on the Eel River. My observations have been made from the train and highway, but, owing to the extreme shyness of these birds, I have never been able to determine whether they were of the American or the red-breasted species.

In looking over my records, I find that they have been made in every month of the year except July, September and October, and this leads me to believe that this species resides in this locality throughout the year.

The Eel is a rather narrow, swift, stream, flowing over a gravel bed and never roily, and when it is at half flood, showing little white water and in color a fine emerald green, it gives a rich setting for these ducks, which I believe are surpassed by none in beauty.

On February 16th of the present year, I made the drive from Wilits to Eureka, a distance of one hundred fifty miles, the road following the south fork of the main Eel nearly the entire distance. In this distance I saw twenty-two merganser drakes and attempted several unsuccessful stalks. They go placidly about their fishing while you drive by, but stop the machine, even some distance away, and they will either fly or partly submerge and rapidly drop down stream with the current, and it is impossible to make an identification.

On my return trip, about the 20th, I was delayed some time by a loaded truck mired down, which gave me an opportunity to take my glasses and go down the river to where I found a log jutting out over the bank about twenty feet. A careful examination of the river showed no merganser, when suddenly a male appeared within two hundred feet of me, and followed shortly by the female. They both dove several times and the female caught a fish which was too large to be swallowed whole, so they tore it up and shared the kill. When I made my presence known, the female dove and did not reappear. The male submerged partly and disappeared around the bend.

#### The Wrestling Heron.

The skill of the great blue heron as a fisherman is known to all, but its prowess as a wrestler with a salmon two feet long, and weighing in the neighborhood of twenty pounds, was a novelty to me. On September 18th, 1921, I was trying to stalk a merganser on the Mad river, when I observed a heron tossing a large fish, (evidently a salmon), over his head and into water not more than three or four inches deep.

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Then the fun began, for the heron evidently did not know that salmon make their way hundreds of miles up rather shallow streams, floundering over shallow riffles for great distances. After the first toss, the heron closed in with a thrust which apparently caught the fish near the tail. As it was lunging by, it upset the heron, causing it to roll over several times in the water. A second and a third attempt failed to drive home a killing blow, and the bird evidently knew when it had had enough, for it walked to a gravel bar and began to preen.

The salmon gained the river badly crippled, though it may have been wounded before being attacked by the heron. The saying, "thin as a rail," could not be applied to the heron after its wetting, as it looked more like a lath, instead. Although the heron is constantly in or about the water, I have never seen one bathe.

### Herodian Architecture.

To those who have watched the stately stride of the great blue heron, it would be difficult to imagine this bird building, or trying to build, a nest in the crotch of a stake and rider fence only fifty-two inches from the ground. So, when I first observed the bird alighting with the limb of a tree twenty-seven inches long and three-quarters of an inch on one end, tapering to an inch and an eighth on the other, soaked with water and weighing about two pounds, I thought the limb might have snails attached and that it was being carried to a favorable spot for a feast.

An examination showed about twenty sticks in place, and four days later, about thirty. A great deal of skill had been shown in building this V-shaped pile of sticks, which at the time would bear my weight. The main stringer, thirty-one inches in length by about one in diameter, had one end resting on the fence rail, while the other end was blocked up three and a quarter inches by four branches to bring it level, or nearly so. The two short sides of the V were separated by a short piece, two inches in diameter, which had short nubs of branches hooked over the fence rail, while the balance was of crib construction.

The bird showed little concern when I examined the nest, and added another stick seventeen minutes after my visit.

CARL R. SMITH.



## WHITE CRANES

Field Notes, about 1494.

"Under the influence of superstition they landed in search of fresh water and a certain archer, on the lookout for game, caught distant glimpses of a flock of tall white cranes feeding in an everglade; he fled to his comrades with the story that he had seen a party of men in long white tunics and all agreed that these must be the "people of Mangon." Columbus sent a small company ashore to find them. It is needless to add that the search was fruitless. \* \* \* These tropical birds are called *soldados* or "soldiers" because their stately attitudes remind one of sentinels on duty. The whole town of Angostura in Venezuela, was one day frightened out of its wits by the sudden appearance of a flock of these cranes on the summit of a neighboring hill. They were mistaken for a war party of Indians."—*Fiske & Humboldt*.

Contributed by Amy E. Gunn.

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### THE ECHO IN THE HEART

It's little I can tell  
About the birds in books;  
And yet I know them well,  
By their music and their looks;

When May comes down the lane,  
Her airy lovers throng  
To welcome her with song,  
And follow in her train;

Each minstrel weaves his part  
In that wild-flowery strain,  
And I know them a'l again  
By their echo in my heart.

—Henry Van Dyke.

\* \* \*

**MARCH FIELD TRIP** was taken on Sunday, the 12th, to the lake country back of Fairfax. Leaving the train at this point, the party traversed the Bolinas road and the old grade to Bon Tempe, on Lagunitas Creek, where lunch was eaten. The walk was continued to Liberty, near the head of Alpine Lake, returning up the creek to Lake Lagunitas. Here a distant water fowl was greeted by three different names by as many members of the party, upon which it dove and was seen no more. The old Fish Grade was then followed past Phoenix Lake to Ross, making a ten-mile tramp on a day that was ideal for bird study and enjoyment.

Fifty-two species were recognized. They were: Western and eared grebes, glaucous-winged, Western, California and Bonaparte gul's; Farallon and Brandt cormorants, canvasback, scaup, white-winged and surf scoters; great blue heron, coot, California quail, band-tailed pigeon and turkey vulture; sharp-shinned and sparrow hawks, kingfisher, California woodpecker and red-shafted flicker; Anna hummer, California jay, crow, meadow lark, Brewer blackbird; purple finch, linnet, green-backed goldfinch, pine siskin, Nuttall and golden-crowned sparrows; junco, song sparrow, San Francisco and California towhees; Hutton vireo, lutescent and Audubon warblers, swallow and Vigors wren; Sierra creeper, titmouse, chickadee, bush-tit, wren-tit and ruby-crowned kinglet; hermit thrush, Western robin, varied thrush and Western bluebird.

Ten members and one guest made the trip: Mesdames Kibbe and Warrington; Misses Ames, Baily and Sterne; Messrs. Kibbe, More, Rapp and Thomas, and Mr. Moore.

MARIE STERNE.

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## AUDUBON ASSOCIATION OF THE PACIFIC

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